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THE MURDER OF THE YOUNG PRINCES IN THE TOWER.

CALL no man happy till he is dead, says an ancient proverb, and there is wisdom in it. When the babe is born, none can tell what will be its course or when its life will end. The day may break out fine, but rain and clouds and storms may come before night.

clay. These facts are less seldom witnessed, these truths seem almost less true in these days of monotonous civilisation, of railways, of reading and writing and the electric telegraph. But all history abounds with them. In the past they seem to be but common-



TYRRELL VIEWING THE BODIES OF THE MURDERED PRINCES.

Everywhere around us are change, decay, and death. None can boast, for none know what a day may bring forth. Shame may come to honour and honour to shame. Lazarus and Dives may change places. A turn in the wheel may exalt the peasant into a prince. Another turn, and the prince may be a peasant or a lifeless lump of

place maxims. In the past, to be was to be great in peril ; to be born to a crown was often a sure road to death ; to be in a position that all would envy, was the sure and certain prelude to being in a position from which even the poorest and vulgarest would shrink. Let us take an illustration from the national chronicles of England.

On a bright May morning—it was May 4th, 1483—there was a royal procession wending its way from the great north road along the ancient streets of London. From far and near, from crowded balcony and quaint housetop, looked down admiring eyes. London had come forth to greet her young king, though there was terror in its walls nevertheless. The queen and her son the Duke of York and her five daughters were trembling all the while in the sanctuary at Westminster. They trembled, as well they might; for they knew the man who had now placed himself at the head of power, and who, under a mask of seeming loyalty, had but one object in view—the aggrandisement of himself. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the Protector, has always been considered one of the worst characters in English history. In childhood we learn his loathsome crimes, and in after-life Shakespeare perpetuates the impressions of childhood. If we believe many of the historians, Richard III. was a monster in body as well as in mind. “The tyrant king Richard,” says John Ross of Warwick, his contemporary, “was born at Fotheringay, in Northamptonshire. Having remained two years in his mother’s womb, he came into the world with teeth and long hair down to his shoulders.” What he adds is, perhaps, more strictly true. “He was of a low stature, having a short face with his right shoulder a little higher than his left,” a picture which was wrought up into absolute deformity by subsequent historians, but contradicted by the testimony of a witness of undoubted credit—a picture which Shakspeare has made popular in the speech of the Duke himself, where he says—

“I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamped, and want love’s majesty
To strut before a wanton, ambling nymph;
I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion—
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature;
Deformed, unfinished; sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable;
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.”

But, in reality, it seems that Richard’s defects were more moral than personal. It was his mind that was so marred. It was the soul, and not the carcass in which it was set, that was so defective. His enemies reluctantly confessed that Richard possessed personal courage. If I may venture to say anything to his honour, though he was a little man, yet he was a noble and valiant soldier, says one. He was much admired for his eloquence and powers of persuasion, which were almost irresistible; especially when aided by his bounty, which was sometimes excessive. His understanding was good; but he seems to have been a cunning man rather than a great one—impenetrably secret, and a perfect master of all the arts of dissimulation. Ambition was his ruling passion. It was this which prompted him to supplant his hapless nephew, in order to obtain his crown: and, when he had formed that design, he seems to have stuck at nothing in order to secure its success. Coolly and deliberately he murdered the Earl of Rivers, Lords Grey and Hastings, because they stood between him and the crown. His ambition led him to still darker deeds. Between him and the object of his guilty and unscrupulous ambition, were two young princes—chargeable with no crime—innocent of all wrong—the children of his brother and wards of his own. But it was necessary, or it seemed to him such, that they should die, and their fate has ever been the one flagrant enormity—the one damning crime with which all generations of men have associated his memory, and for which they have for ever abhorred his very name. If great men knew in what light history would paint them, or how cold and impartial would be the verdict of posterity, they would less frequently venture to go wrong. But, for Richard, as for every man, there was some excuse in the circumstances by which he was surrounded, and in the character of his age. Most men would have done as he did to obtain power. All men had to wade through seas of blood; yet no one would have suspected, as he rode through the streets of London, bare-headed, before his nephew, calling to the people, “Behold your king!” that to him that youthful king would have to owe not merely the loss of his crown, but of his very life. Many might have envied that young boy, as he was the object of every eye, and as the public vented its acclamations in his

praise. To many, such a life must have seemed full of promise of all that the world desires—the dawn of a day that would know no cloud.

In a little more than a month, that power and splendour had passed away. By the Protector’s authority, a sermon had been preached in St. Paul’s Cross by a time-serving clergyman—and such men are always to be had when they are wanted—to proclaim the young king and his brother bastards. The Duke of Buckingham made an eloquent harangue on the same subject to the mayor and citizens of London; and in August the crown had been placed on Richard’s head. But the young princes, where were they? Beneath the stone steps of the Tower, sleeping the sleep of death after life’s little fever of greatness and glory. The murder has been denied; but there seems no reason for doubting it. It has come down to us on the authority of Sir Thomas More, who only wrote five-and-twenty years after its occurrence, when a variety of sources, that he might not be enabled to acknowledge publicly, were open to him for the acquisition of materials. The following is his version:—“King Richard, after his coronation, taking his way to Gloucester to visit in his new honour the town of which he bore the name of old, devised, as he rode, to fulfil that thing which he had before intended. And forasmuch as his mind misgave him, that his nephews living then would not reckon that he could have right to the realm, he therefore thought without delay to rid them, as though killing of his kinsmen might aid his cause, and make him kindly king. Whereupon he sent John Greene, whom he especially trusted, unto Sir Robert Brakenbury, constable of the Tower, with a letter and credence also, that the same Sir Robert should in anywise put the two children to death. This John Greene did his errand to Brakenbury, kneeling before our Lady in the Tower, who plainly answered, that he would never put them to death to die therefore. With which answer Greene returned, recounting the same to King Richard at Warwick, yet on his journey; wherewith he took such displeasure and thought, that the same night he said to a secret page of his: ‘Oh! whom shall a man trust? They that I have brought up myself—they that I thought would have mostly served me—even those fail, and at my commandment will do nothing for me.’ ‘Sir,’ quoth the page, ‘there lieth one in the pallet-chamber without that I dare well say to do your grace’s pleasure—the thing were right hard that he would refuse;’ meaning by this Sir James Tyrrell.” Accordingly, Tyrrell was sent for, and became compliant. It was a villany from which he had not the grace to shrink, and it was devised that the two young princes should be murdered in their beds, “to the execution whereof he appointed Miles Forrest, one of the four that before kept them; and to him he joined one John Dighton, his own horse-keeper, a big, broad, square, and strong knave.” And when the time came, More tells us, “all the others being removed from them, this Miles Forrest and John Dighton, about midnight, came into the chamber, and suddenly wrapped them among the clothes, keeping down by force the feather-bed and pillows hard upon their mouths, that within a while they smothered and stifled them, and their breaths failing, they gave up to God their innocent souls, into the joys of heaven, leaving to their tormentors their bodies dead in bed; after which, the wretches laid them out upon the bed and fetched Tyrrell to see them; and when he was satisfied of their death, he caused the murderers to bury them at the stair-foot, mostly deep in the ground, under a great heap of stones.” The stranger who now visits the chapel of the White Tower will see, at the end of the passage which leads from the outer door to the foot of the circular staircase winding upwards to the sacred edifice, the old trunk of a mulberry-tree, reared against the wall in the corner. There stood the stairs; and beneath those stairs, in 1674, were found bones “answerable to the ages of the royal youths,” which were accordingly, by Charles the Second’s orders, honourably interred in Henry the Seventh’s chapel at Westminster. The spot was marked by the erection of the above mulberry-tree, which was cut down a few years ago, when the present passage was opened. Thus the tale was confirmed—if confirmation was required—and when the evidence for the universal belief was of the most convincing kind. Richard waded through seas of blood to the throne. Between him and it stood the royal princes; the way of getting rid of those princes would soon be clear. Once wrong, for Richard there was

no alternative but to continue wrong. It was his necessity. The tale was even denied; there seems no reason, however, to doubt its truth. Shakspeare—who, as all the world knows, was a better historian than many a man who would deem play-writing a profane art, and Shakspeare himself little better than one of the wicked—may have set down Tyrrell's very words as he narrated the murder:—

"The tyrannous and bloody act is done,
The most arch deed of piteous massacre
That ever yet this land was guilty of.
Dighton and Forrest, whom I did suborn
To do this ruthless deed of butchery,
Albeit they were fleshed villains, bloody dogs,
Melting with tenderness and mild compassion,
Wept like two children in their death's sad story.
'Oh thus,' quoth Dighton, 'lay the gentle babes.'
'Thus, thus,' quoth Forrest, 'girdling one another
Within their alabaster innocent arms;
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
Which in their summer beauty kissed each other.
A book of prayers on their pillow lay,
Which once,' quoth Forrest, 'almost changed my mind.
But oh! the devil!—Here the villain stopped;
But Dighton thus told on:—'We smothered
The most replenished sweet work of nature
That from the prime creation ere she framed.
Hence both are gone, with conscience and remorse.
They could not speak, and so I left them both
To bear thus tidings to the bloody king.'"

But the crime failed to answer its end. Richard had to pay the penalty of his crime by the forfeit of his life, and thus Nemesis was avenged. In the shame attached to Richard's name ever since—in the horror with which all have regarded it—she has had a still deeper and more enduring revenge, and the two young princes murdered in the Tower still live in the page of history and in the sympathies of men.

THE AUTHOR AND THE FRENCH PUBLISHER.

IN 1838, a young author, quite unknown to fame, called one morning early upon the worthy Ambrose Dupont, the celebrated publisher of the Rue Vivienne. The lord of the book-trade was very much in the humour, on that occasion, of a wild boar after a day's chase by fierce dogs. He received the young author literally with a growl, enough to have terrified a timid man out of the house. He coolly pulled out his manuscript, and begged the publisher to read it. Ambrose Dupont, a worthy man, though rough, refused even to look at it. The author insisted. The publisher told him to take it and himself away together. The young man politely declined; and Dupont at last, to get rid of his importunities, told him to leave his book and go.

A week later he called again, and so on for about three months, once every week, to ask the fate of his novel, which, at last, he did hear. It was not a very flattering opinion that was communicated

to him. But he only smiled, and went away. About a fortnight later he presented himself again in the ante-chamber of M. Dupont.

"What, sir," exclaimed he, "again? Methinks I told you my mind last time sufficiently clearly."

"Sir, you convinced me," said the young Jesuit; "and I have called to say that, acquiescing in your opinion, I have burnt my manuscript."

"Ah!" replied the publisher, somewhat surprised, "then I scarcely comprehend the present object of your visit."

"I have not come on my own account, but if you will spare me a few minutes—"

"Walk into my private room, sir," said Dupont.

"Sir," began the other (our readers will recollect the scene is laid in France), "you have heard of Manzoni?"

"Sir, his reputation is European. I would have given him any price for a book."

"Then, sir, allow me to say that—it is a great secret—I bring you the first volume of a translation of a new work by him."

"A whole volume?" exclaimed Dupont eagerly.

"Yes, a whole volume," said the young author.

"Will you leave it a day or two?" asked the publisher.

"No; I can only hand it to you, if sold."

"But you can read a few chapters?"

"With pleasure."

"Excuse me a moment," said Dupont; and he went out and brought a gentleman from an inner room.

The young author read a chapter; the publisher and his friend looked at each other; they smiled. Presently Ambrose Dupont interrupted the reader.

"What do you want for the book?"

"Twenty-five copies, and forty pounds a volume."

"You agree to that."

"With pleasure."

The treaty was made, an agreement drawn up and signed. The publisher was full of admiration. He addressed Soulié, the author, whom he had brought in to listen, in no hesitating language. He declared to him that it was better than any of the celebrated author's previous works; the warm atmosphere of Italy breathed forth in every page. The translator bowed and smiled.

The work went to press, the publisher read the sheets with real interest. At last the eventful day came, when the title-page was placed in his hands. He read with amazement the name of a popular French novel, "Bertrand de Born."

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed angrily; "this is the title of the book I refused."

"Exactly," said the young man.

"And why have you put it to the translation?"

"It is not a translation. This is the book you refused without reading it."

Ambrose Dupont burst into a loud laugh, shook hands with the cunning fellow, and published his book, which was very successful. Such a trick would scarcely have been appreciated in this country, but as French ideas are, it was considered very natural and was generally admired, as what may be called a shrewd and clever ruse.

JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE.

THE intercourse between Japan and China is an interesting feature in the history of these two remarkable countries. They were at one time intimate and active, though not always friendly. The Central Empire, as Japanese writers call China, looked down upon Dai Nippon with great contempt, claiming a sovereignty over it; while, on the other hand, the Japanese looked upon the Chinese as inferior animals, below them in morals, in physical formation, and everything. They are ready to own that in letters the Chinese were beforehand with them, because they actually did receive their literary knowledge from the Celestial Nation. According to Chinese historians, civilisation was conveyed to Japan in a very curious way, by a kind of colony. We are told that, in the second century of our era, the lord of the Central Empire, having

been informed by certain learned and worthy philosophers that the herb which gave immortality grew in Japan in abundance, sent over to the island some three thousand boys and girls, who were to discover and bring back the inestimable plant. It appears, however, that the said three thousand boys and girls, being unable to find the valuable vegetable in question, and being all familiar with the summary methods of punishment in vogue in China, remained in Japan and settled there; thus, they all being fresh from school, gave the Japanese the benefit of their learning and letters. Japanese writers, however, contemptuously reject this learned explanation, and say that letters and science came *via* the Korean peninsula; an explanation neither so romantic nor so striking as the former, but, apparently, having the advantage of truth.